

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic BLACK METROPOLIS THEMATIC NOMINATION

and or common

2. Locationstreet & number 3539-49, 3619-27, 3647-55 S. State; 3140, 3435 S. Indiana;
3763 S. Wabash; 3517-33 S. Giles; 3501 S. King Dr. not for publication
King Drive at 35th Street.
city, town Chicago vicinity of

state Illinois code county Cook code

3. Classification THEMATIC GROUP

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☐ private	☒ unoccupied	☒ commercial	☒ park
☐ structure	☒ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational	☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☒ religious
☒ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Ownership - - See Individual Inventory Forms

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 118 N. Clark Street

city, town Chicago, state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle Multiple (see continuation sheet) has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ nodate ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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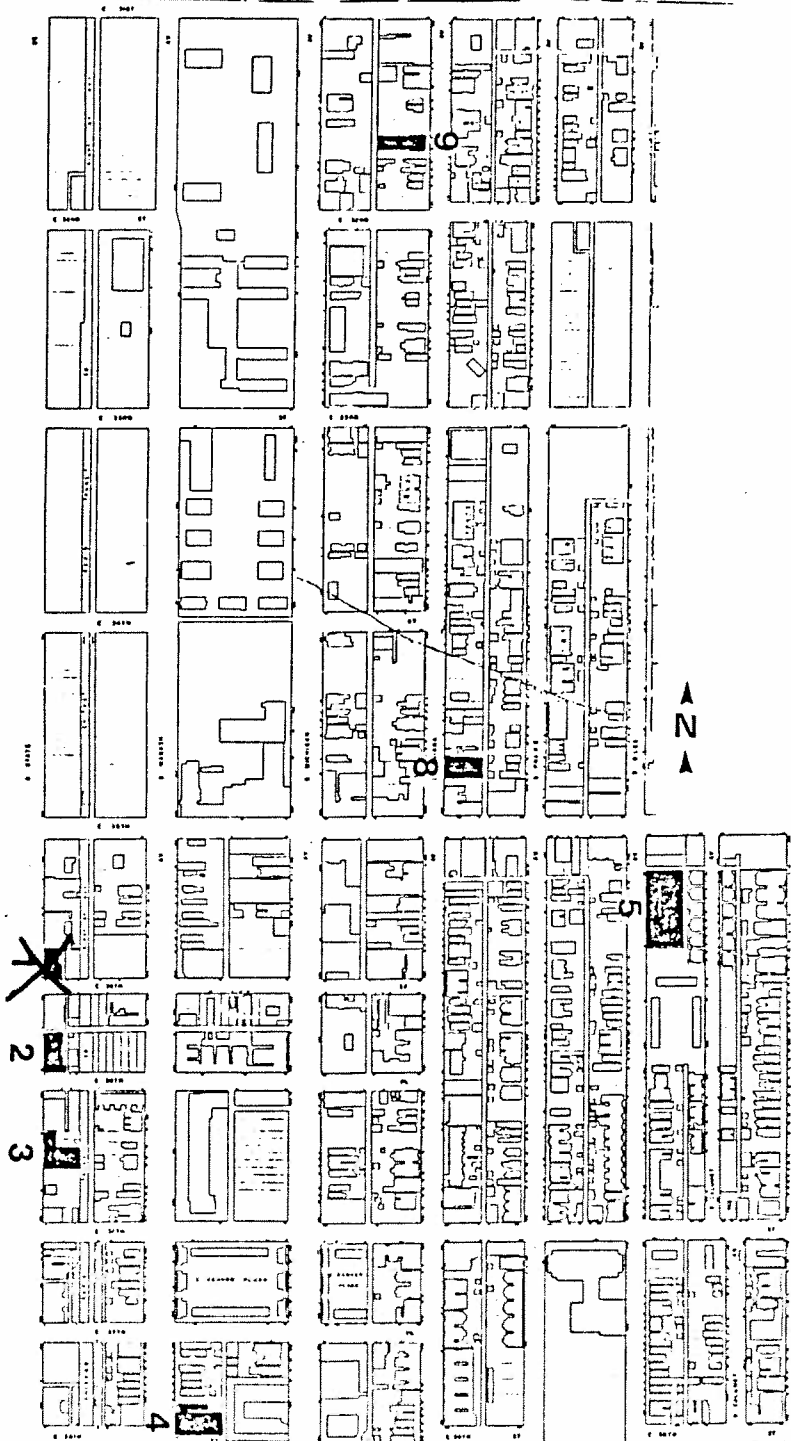
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demolished

1. ~~JORDAN BUILDING~~
~~3539-49 S. STATE STREET~~
2. OVERTON HYGIENIC BUILDING
3619-27 S. STATE STREET
3. CHICAGO BEE BUILDING
3647-55 S. STATE STREET
4. WABASH AVENUE Y.M.C.A.
3763 S. WABASH AVENUE
5. EIGHTH REGIMENT ARMORY
3517-33 S. GILES AVENUE
6. VICTORY SCULPTURE
35th STREET AT KING DRIVE
7. LIBERTY LIFE/ SUPREME LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
3501 S. KING DRIVE
8. CHICAGO DEFENDER BUILDING
3435 S. INDIANA AVENUE
9. UNITY HALL
3140 S. INDIANA AVENUE



7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☒ fair

☒ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The buildings which comprise the Black Metropolis Thematic Nomination are located in the Near South community of Douglas, located approximately three miles south of the central business district of Chicago. The boundaries of the Douglas community extend approximately from 26th Street on the north to 39th Street on the south, and from the Dan Ryan Expressway on the west to Lake Michigan on the east. The earliest development of the area was in the 1850s when statesman Stephen A. Douglas started residential development of the lakefront area around the foot of 35th Street. Formal development was sporadic, with early land uses ranging from small residential cluster developments to the construction of Camp Douglas, a Civil War prisoner encampment which was erected in 1861 and removed at the end of the war. By the 1870s the streets were fully laid out in a regular grid system conforming to the street patterns and numbering of the city at large. Although there was limited development of the area with speculative row house projects in the 1870s, full development of the area did not occur until the mid-1880s through 1900, when larger upper-middle class single-family residences nearly filled the available vacant land. While a majority of the properties were two- and three-story masonry row houses, a number of large free-standing brick residential structures were erected throughout the area. Commercial development at that time was limited, being concentrated mainly on 31st, 35th, and State streets, and consisted of buildings incorporating stores on the ground floor and offices or apartments on the floors above.

Between 1900 and 1920, the Douglas community changed from a white upper-middle class community to a predominantly black community with income levels varying from the upper and upper-middle class to the limited finances of many of the people who settled in the area after leaving the South for greater opportunities in Chicago.

While the black population largely occupied existing buildings dating from the late 1800s, the black business community developed a new business district, fronting on the east side of State Street between 35th and 39th streets. Built largely with black capital, several major business buildings were erected at this location between 1908 and 1931, and were reflective of the commercial styles of the time.

The Great Depression of the 1930s had long-term detrimental effects on the Black Metropolis development, virtually wiping out many of its principal businesses and institutions. Many of the business and residential buildings fell into disrepair, and were subsequently demolished in the 1950s and 1960s as the target of urban renewal land clearances. Institutional developments such as the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, Michael Reese Hospital complex, and public housing projects replaced much of the original housing and business stock of the area during that period, but fortunately most of the significant properties associated with the Black Metropolis development still survive. Of the eight properties listed in the Black Metropolis Thematic Nomination, three are partially vacant and in need of stabilization: the Jordan and Overton Hygienic buildings, and the Eighth Regiment Armory, while the remaining structures are presently in active use. Although somewhat deteriorated, the Jordan and Overton buildings and the Eighth Regiment Armory are in restorable condition. While many of the structures which once adjoined the designated Black Metropolis properties have been demolished, the historical and architectural integrity of the remaining structures is very high.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

The selection of significant building for the Black Metropolis Thematic Nomination was determined principally by examination of books and periodicals, both historic and contemporary, which deal with black urban history of the time, and identifying the significant business and institutions of the Black Metropolis movement between 1900 and 1930, centered in the vicinity of State and 35th streets. Site inspections were made of the cited significant buildings, and those which were still standing were photographed and historically documented. Through neglect and subsequent land clearance for urban renewal projects, many of the potentially significant buildings have been demolished, yet enough of the highly significant structures remain intact to present a historical continuity as a thematic group. Of the principal business structures, the highly significant Jordan, Overton Hygienic, Chicago Bee, Chicago Defender, and Liberty Life/Supreme Life Buildings still survive, while the three sites occupied by the Binga State Bank, the National Pythian Temple (designed by black architect Walter T. Bailey), the headquarters of the Chicago Whip and Broad-Ax newspapers have been demolished. Of social and

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political institutions, the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A., Oscar DePriest's Unity Hall, and the Eighth Regiment Armory were the most significant at the time of Black Metropolis, and fortunately are among the survivors.

The most helpful sources were nationally based historic periodicals, particularly the Chicago Defender newspaper and The Crisis Magazine. Back files from the early twentieth century clearly identified which structures were contemporarily regarded as significant within the nationwide black community, and offered a basis of comparison with other black commercial and social developments in other parts of the country. Similarly helpful were contemporary articles which were published in the white press of the time, which gave corroborative, yet different, perspectives on the Black Metropolis movement. Sadly, much original documentation, both published and manuscript, has been lost, but has been generally covered in important works such as St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis* published in 1945 and Alan Spear's *Black Chicago* published in 1967.

Private residences and churches were eliminated from the thematic nomination because their locations were not centralized as an integral part of Black Metropolis, and were mainly existing structures which were originally built by the white community which preceded it. An unfortunate casualty of the widespread demolition and land clearance in the area was the virtual elimination of all principal restaurant and club buildings associated with the jazz movement of the 1920s, erasing an important facet of the Black Metropolis from the thematic nomination. Of the significant structures and sites of the Black Metropolis Movement as centered in the vicinity of State and 35th streets in the early part of this century, the nine sites identified in the thematic nomination are unfortunately the sole survivors. Considering the high historic significance of the structures which remain, their survival is indeed remarkable considering the widespread demolition which has occurred around them.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☒ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☐ architecture	☐ education	☒ military	☒ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800–1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☒ industry	☒ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1908–31

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Black Metropolis Thematic nomination is comprised of eight individual buildings and one public monument which collectively represent what are among the most significant landmarks of black urban history in the United States. Centered in the vicinity of State and Thirty-fifth streets on Chicago's Near South Side, these properties are the tangible remains of what was once a thriving "city-within-a-city" created in the early part of this century by the city's black community as an alternative to the restrictions, exploitations, and indifference that characterized the prevalent attitudes of the city at large. In contrast to usual urban development patterns of the time where blacks settled in existing neighborhoods and buildings, the community at State and 35th streets was literally built from the ground up with its own economic, social, and political establishment, directly supported by black enterprise and capital. Contemporarily referred to by residents as "the metropolis," the development had firmly established itself by the turn of the century, and prospered until the 1930s when the Depression and socio-economic conditions virtually halted its further development.

The origin of Chicago's black heritage is synonymous with the origin of the city itself, one of the earliest recorded permanent settlers being Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a French-speaking black who was engaged in trade with the Indians by the 1780s. Upon Point DuSable's departure in 1800, there was no significant black settlement in the area until the 1840s as Chicago was developing as a rapidly growing Midwestern city. At that time, blacks fleeing oppression in the South began to settle in Chicago, forming the nucleus for what was to develop into the first cohesive black community, which, according to census records, was comprised of 323 persons in 1850 and nearly tripled to 955 persons by 1860. The black community was not assimilated into the city at large, but was concentrated into small pockets throughout the city, the largest settlement being on the Near South Side, adjacent to the western fringes of the central business district. By 1870, the city's black population had grown to 3,691 persons, and steadily doubled in number with each succeeding decade. The boundaries of the South Side black community expanded southward in a long narrow strip, often known as the "Black Belt", bordered by the railroad yards and industrial properties to the west, the affluent residential neighborhoods adjacent to Wabash Avenue to the east, and extending south from Van Buren Street to Thirty-ninth Street, a distance of nearly five miles. The established white business and social communities of Chicago were largely indifferent to the black community, consequently it gradually evolved a complete commercial, social, and political base of its own. As the black community grew, the demand for goods and services was increasingly supplied from within the community itself, and had diversified to such an extent by 1885 that a complete directory of black businesses was published, *The Colored Men's Professional and Business Directory of Chicago*. Similarly, black-supported churches and social organizations proliferated, and evidence of the community's political strength was shown in the election of John Jones, to the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 1874. Jones, a downtown tailor of mixed free-black and white parentage, was supported in his election by both blacks and whites, and was the first black to hold elected office in the State of Illinois.

By 1900, with a population of 30,050 persons, the South Side black community began to take on the characteristics of a small "city-within-a-city," which paralleled the growth and expansion of the City of Chicago at large. A major factor in the growth of "black metropolis" after the turn of the century was its increasing access to financial resources due to the prosperity of the black community. The unwillingness of the established white financial community to support its enterprises ceased to be an impediment to growth. Through the great amount of money generated within the black community, an increasingly independent economic base developed, culminating in the establishment of Chicago's first black-owned bank founded by entrepreneur Jesse Binga in 1908. With greater access to financial resources, the commercial and business interests of Black Metropolis greatly diversified, with a wide range of professional, commercial, and manufacturing interests.

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Growth was further intensified by an increase in the black population by 148% between 1910 and 1920, a period often referred to as the "Great Migration" due to the great numbers of blacks who left the South for greater opportunities in Chicago during that time. Despite the fact that it was in large part cut off from the economic and social mainstream of the rest of the city, Black Metropolis, with a population of 109,548 by 1920, had firmly established itself as a virtual self-contained metropolitan development.

Beginning with the establishment of the black-owned Binga Bank at 3633 South State Street in 1908, the vicinity of State and 35th streets was rapidly transformed into the Wall Street of the black community, housing a wide variety of commercial enterprises. Until the time of the Great Migration, the black business community was largely housed in existing residential and small storefront buildings which were adapted for business purposes, often with unsatisfactory results. New construction was limited mainly to a handful of small one- and two-story structures which were erected as investments by white speculators with an eye on the growing potential of the black economic market. This trend was reversed in 1916 when ground was broken for the Jordan Building, at the northeast corner of State and 36th streets, an impressive three-story combination store and apartment building which was commissioned by songwriter and music publisher Joseph J. Jordan. The precedent of the Jordan Building was closely followed by a series of ambitious black-owned and -financed building projects which were carried out along South State Street throughout the 1920s. The most important of these included the Overton Hygienic Building, a combination store, office, and manufacturing building commissioned by the diverse entrepreneur Anthony Overton in 1922; the Chicago Bee Building, also commissioned by Overton in 1929 to house the *Chicago Bee* newspaper; the seven-story Knights of Pythias building erected in 1926 by a prominent lodge order after plans by Chicago's first black architect, Walter T. Bailey; and the quarters of the Binga State Bank and the Binga Arcade Building, erected by Banker Jesse Binga in 1924 and 1929 respectively. Of these buildings, the Jordan, Overton Hygienic, and Chicago Bee buildings still survive, largely as originally designed during the boom time of Black Metropolis.

In marked contrast to the staid banks, insurance companies, and professional offices which conducted business by day on State Street, the area was magically transformed by night by the bright lights and exciting sounds of the numerous nightclubs and all-night restaurants which were interspersed throughout the business district. These were the popular jazz clubs where such notables as King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton played and earned Chicago its reputation as a jazz center in the 1920s. Many of the musicians had arrived from New Orleans, St. Louis, and other points south, each bringing with them characteristics of the musical style of their origins, yet the combination of regional styles soon melded into a distinct musical character which was uniquely Chicago. Beginning with Robert T. Motts' Pekin Theater at 2700 South State Street, which opened in 1905, Black Metropolis began to develop numerous music-oriented clubs and cafes during the following decade, reaching their height in the 1920s. Among the most famous were the Dreamland Cafe at 3618 South State Street, the Royal Gardens (later Lincoln Gardens) at 459 East 31st Street, and the Elite Club at 3030 South State Street. A notable and notorious club was the white-owned Panama at the south-east corner of State and 35th streets, where actress and cabaret performer Florence Mills got her start as part of the Panama Trio, and whose pianist was the noted performer and songwriter Tony Jackson, who is best known for composing the million-dollar hit "Pretty Baby" in 1916. The musical intensity of the area was such that it once was suggested that if a horn were held up at the corner of State and 35th streets, it would play itself because of all the musical winds circulating in the area.

Churches played an important role in the development of Black Metropolis, both from a spiritual as well as a social standpoint in the community. Large congregations such as the Olivet Baptist Church and Pilgrim Baptist Church conducted extensive social programs, and were instrumental in securing lodging and employment for the newcomers which arrived from the South during the "Great Migration." Similar programs were conducted at the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. which opened in 1914 through the impetus of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, the President of Sears, Roebuck & Company, who had considerable interest in black-oriented

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causes. Programs at the Y.M.C.A. included extensive job training programs including such specialized programs as auto repair and manual training.

Organized political alliances gave Black Metropolis increased participation in city government, beginning with the election of Oscar DePriest as the city's first black alderman in 1915. Initially working in alliance with the white Republican bosses who controlled the political destiny of the Black Metropolis wards, DePriest sought to build a political organization of his own, forming the "Peoples Movement Club," with headquarters in a former Jewish social club at 3140 South Indiana Avenue. While DePriest's organization was the most influential of the black political organizations, it faced stiff competition from other organizations and rival political figures within the black community. The political voting strength of the Black Metropolis wards was such that by the 1920s the political control was effectively taken from the white political bosses who formerly controlled them, and put into the hands of political figures from within the black community. Gains were made in representation in municipal government as well as in the state legislature, and in 1928 Oscar DePriest had the distinction of being the first black from the North to be elected to a seat in the United States House of Representatives, serving for three consecutive terms.

The Black Metropolis development gained nationwide publicity as a model of black achievement, with extensive coverage in both the white as well as the black press of the time. Chicago was one of the centers of black journalism, having at different times several black-owner newspapers, including the *Chicago Whip*, *Chicago Bee*, *Broad Axe*, and the *Half Century Magazine*. The most influential of the Chicago publications was the *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper of nationwide circulation which was founded by Robert S. Abbott in 1905. The *Chicago Defender* had a major impact on black thought and development in America by its combination of news items pertinent to blacks nationwide in conjunction with strong editorial viewpoints on a wide variety of civil rights issues. The "Great Migration" of 1910 to 1920 was due in large part to editorials published in the *Chicago Defender* urging blacks to leave the oppression of the South for greater opportunity in Chicago and the North.

Black Metropolis reached the height by the mid-1920s, but its economic vitality began to gradually weaken after 1925 due to socio-economic conditions which were out of the control of its developers. Although the growth and prosperity of Black Metropolis was directly tied to the rapid growth of the black population, particularly during the Great Migration, the sharp decline in new arrivals during the 1920s slowed its development. As employment opportunities did not keep pace with the population increases of the previous decade, unemployment weakened the financial base of the community, adversely affecting the businesses of Black Metropolis which were reliant on support from within the black community. Further deterioration of the financial base occurred when white businessmen who previously had ignored the black community began to realize its economic potential. Rather than attempt to break into the prosperous existing market at 35th and State, an alternate business area was created along 47th Street principally developed and financed by white developers and store owners who controlled the property to such an extent that black-owned and -developed properties and businesses were largely excluded from the area. The introduction of established white chain stores and commercial enterprises along 47th Street gave insurmountable competition to the independent black business of the 35th Street district and progressively siphoned off its energy and self-supporting financial base. The final blow to Black Metropolis came with the Great Depression of 1929 which closed down most of its black-owned banks, insurance companies, and other business interests, while many of the businesses of 47th Street with their broader access to credit and nationwide financial backing remained largely intact. The self-supporting momentum of Black Metropolis, which its backers had hoped would lead to recognition and eventual integration with the established downtown business establishment, was thus dealt a serious blow from which many negative after-effects lingered for decades.

After the 35th Street district lost its principal business interests during the Depression, the area quickly declined, and by 1950 one local writer dismissed the intersection of 35th and State streets as "Bronzeville's skid-row." Deterioration and urban renewal took their toll during the 1950s and 1960s resulting in the demolition of entire blocks along State Street for the construction of public housing projects and the campus of the

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Illinois Institute of Technology, as well as extensive isolated demolitions throughout the community.

Fortunately, many of the most significant buildings of the Black Metropolis development have survived, although some are in a state of neglect and deterioration. Collectively, these buildings are worthy of recognition and preservation as monuments to the determination of the black urban pioneers who created them.

M.R.A.

H/D (IF APP)

NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE

HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL

OTHER

PROPERTY NAME WABASH AVENUE YMCA

LOCATION 3763 S. Wabash Avenue

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

COUNTY Cook

STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

OWNER'S NAME St. Thomas Episcopal Church

LOCATION 3801 S. Wabash Avenue

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds

118 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 13,14,15,16,17 IN HARRIET FARLIN'S SUB. OF LOTS
13,14, AND 15 IN BROWN'S SUB. OF N½ of SW¼ of SW¼

SEC. 34-39-14 (SEE ATTACHED)

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1911-13 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Robert C. Berlin, architect

DESCRIPTION Five-story and basement concrete frame structure faced with brown pressed
brick and buff Bedford limestone trim. Interior arranged with auditorium,
meeting rooms, class rooms, pool and residential quarters.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS Five storey addition added to the north in 1925
(recessed back from street elevation).

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

through the offices of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, this structure was a major social and educational center in Black Metropolis. The Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. also played an important role in assisting new arrivals from the south during the Great Migration. (SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks

320 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois

TEL 744 3038

ATTACH 5" by 7" PHOTO HERE--USE MASKING
TAPE AT CORNERS

INFORMATION BELOW SHOULD ALSO APPEAR ON
BACK OF PHOTO

USE CONTINUATION SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL
PHOTOS, IF ANY

PROPERTY NAME _____

LOCATION _____

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY _____

CAMERA FACING _____

DATE _____

PHOTOGRAPHER _____

LOCATION OF NEGATIVE _____

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WABASH AVENUE Y.M.C.A.
3763 South Wabash Avenue

Date of construction: 1911-13

Architect: Robert C. Berlin

The Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. was opened to the public on June 15, 1913, successfully culminating a three-year fund raising drive to facilitate its erection. The project was initiated through the efforts of Sears, Roebuck & Company chairman Julius Rosenwald, a Chicago businessman whose philanthropic support of black-oriented projects and causes resulted in the construction of Y.M.C.A. buildings and the support of a wide variety of social programs across the country. On January 13, 1911, Rosenwald publicly offered to advance \$25,000 towards the erection of a combined community center, gymnasium, pool, and residential quarters to be run under the auspices of the Young Mens Christian Association in the Douglas community. Rosenwald's offer was soon matched by contributions from many of the city's most prominent businesses and citizens, including N.W. Harris, Cyrus McCormick, Mrs. G.F. Swift, and the Pullman Company. Public contributions also were instrumental in funding its erection, with over \$20,000 being raised within Black Metropolis alone.

The completed Y.M.C.A. was an imposing five-story structure fronted in dark pressed brick with Bedford limestone trim designed by Chicago architect Robert C. Berlin, who had previously served as architect for other Y.M.C.A. projects. The building was of concrete frame construction, and was one of the best equipped structures of its type at the time of its opening.

The timing of the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A.'s opening was auspicious, for it soon became one of the major centers for the assistance of incoming arrivals from the South during the Great Migration. The staff established comprehensive programs for finding housing and employment for the thousands of southern blacks who arrived in Chicago between 1910 and 1920 seeking greater opportunities in Chicago. People arriving with no friends or contacts to guide them in the city found a warm welcome at the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. where the residence rooms were often filled to capacity by newly arrived Chicagoans who stayed until permanent accommodations could be obtained.

The Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. also conducted extensive job training programs, which benefited not only the new arrivals but the established neighborhood residents as well. One of the most popular programs was the auto repair class, where the mechanics of automobile repair were explained in detail, using actual late model cars for demonstration purposes.

Aside from its role in assisting new arrivals to the city, the Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. was an important part of community life in Black Metropolis. The large assembly hall was used for a wide variety of civic meetings and functions of the community, and the gymnasium and pool offered a pleasant diversion for young and old alike. Programmed educa-

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tional and social programs became a staple of neighborhood activities, making the Wabash Y.M.C.A. one of the most heavily utilized public organizations of Chicago's black community.

The Wabash Avenue Y.M.C.A. continued to be an important part of the Douglas community until the late 1970s, when the national office of the Y.M.C.A. decided to close it. The building has been recently targeted for rehabilitation and re-opening under the auspices of a local church which currently holds title to the property.

M.R.A. _____
H/D (IF APP) _____
NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE _____
HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL _____
OTHER _____

PROPERTY NAME JORDAN BUILDING
LOCATION 3529-49 S. State Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago
COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP _____
OWNER'S NAME Brenda Rowland
LOCATION 1723 W. Monterey CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago
STATE Illinois ZIP 60643

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOT 1 OF JORDAN'S RESUBDIVISION OF LOTS 14, 15, 18 AND
19 (EX THE E. 25 FT. AND EX THE WEST 34 FT THEREOF) IN
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE BLOCK 4 OF H.O. STONE'S SUBD. OF N 15 ACRES OF W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$
SEC. 34-39-14

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1916-17 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER J.N. Coleman, architect

DESCRIPTION Three-story and basement building of semi-mill construction, with bearing
exterior masonry walls and interior iron structural members supporting
wood floor slabs and interior partitions. Exterior faced in buff/brown
wire-cut face brick and terra cotta on street fronts.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS Largely in original condition, but considerably
deteriorated due to neglect. Some original sash
damaged or missing.

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

SIGNIFICANCE

First major black-owned and constructed new building in black metropolis.
Erected by songwriter-composer Joseph J. Jordan, a pioneering speculator
in black real estate in Chicago. (SEE ATTACHED)

DEMOLISHED

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks
320 N. Clark Street Rm. 516
Chicago, Illinois 60610 TEL 744 3038

ATTACH 5" by 7" PHOTO HERE--USE MASKING
TAPE AT CORNERS

INFORMATION BELOW SHOULD ALSO APPEAR ON
BACK OF PHOTO

USE CONTINUATION SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL
PHOTOS, IF ANY

PROPERTY NAME _____
LOCATION _____ CITY/TOWN/VICINITY _____
CAMERA FACING _____ DATE _____
PHOTOGRAPHER _____
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE _____

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JORDAN BUILDING
3529-49 South State Street

Date of construction: 1916-17

Architect: J.N. Coleman

DEMOLISHED

The first major black-developed commercial building to be erected in Black Metropolis was the Jordan Building, a three-story combination store and apartment building which was erected 1916-17 at the northeast corner of State and Thirty-sixth streets. The project was promoted by musician and songwriter Joseph J. Jordan, who used the money he acquired from his songwriting and music publishing interests to finance this and several other ventures in Chicago real estate. The unusual combination of music and real estate speculation prompted Junius B. Wood to write of the project in his 1916 essays on Black Chicago in the *Chicago Daily News*:

When telling of Chicago real estate there is always the old story of "once it all could have been bought for a song." On the northeast corner of South State and 36th streets is a piece which actually was bought for a song or two. It represents an investment of \$60,000.

Jordan's musical career covered a wide range of achievement, as a performer, songwriter, music publisher, conductor, arranger, and promoter. Born in 1882, the son of a Cincinnati pool hall owner, Jordan showed great musical ability at an early age, proficient at playing the violin, piano, and drums. While still in his teens, Jordan moved to St. Louis where he became acquainted with pioneer ragtime composer Thomas Turpin, whose Rosebud Cafe was frequented and used as a musical testing ground by such notable ragtime composers as Scott Joplin, Louis Chauvin, and Charles Hunter. Within this intense atmosphere of ragtime creativity, Jordan became proficient as a ragtime composer and songwriter, and he collaborated on the writing and promotion on several stage shows. Jordan was also involved in the organization and musical direction of various musical groups for which he was reputed to have been able to compose full orchestrations within fifteen minutes, ready for performance when the need demanded.

Upon arrival in Chicago late in 1903, Jordan's diverse musical talents were put to full advantage as musical director of Robert T. Motts' Pekin Temple of Music, a position which he held at various intervals between 1903 and 1912. Located at 2700 South State Street, the Pekin was the first full-scale black-owned and -operated theater/variety house in Chicago, and it provided the black community with the first theater facility free of racial restrictions. Under Jordan's guidance, the Pekin became the showcase for Chicago's black musical development, providing the transition from the St. Louis-influenced ragtime of the turn-of-the-century to the innovative Chicago jazz of the teens and twenties. Indicative of Jordan's musical foresight was his organization of the "Memphis Students," a seventeen-member band combining brasses and saxophones with banjos, mandolins, guitars, drums and piano, which opened in early 1905 at Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theater in New York and later toured throughout Europe. Historian James Weldon Johnson credits the Memphis Students as being "the first modern jazz band ever heard on a

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New York stage."

As a side enterprise to Motts' Pekin Temple of Music, Jordan organized a music publishing business, the Pekin Publishing Company, which provided a publication source and copyright protection for the vast black music talent residing in Chicago at the time. Among the works published by this firm were several of Jordan's own compositions, including "Pekin Rag" (1904), "J.J.J. Rag" (1905), "Oh Liza Lady" (1908), and "Dixie Land" (1908). The importance of publication and copyright protection was especially important due to the frequency of music theft by white jazz bands who obtained their inspirations by frequenting the black jazz clubs. Jordan established a strong precedent against this practice in 1917 when he successfully brought suit against the white Original Dixieland Jazz Band for appropriating his 1909 work "That Teasin' Rag" as a part of their Dixie Jazz Band One-Step, a recording which is frequently attributed to be the first popular jazz record. As a result, the records and sheet music were recalled and reprinted with Jordan's name included, qualifying him for royalties for his part in the composition.

Jordan's greatest financial success came with his composition of the hit song "Lovie Joe" which was introduced by Fannie Brice in her first feature billing in the Ziegfeld Follies of 1910. Jordan had further success in the production of and collaboration on several hit stage shows, including Cole & Johnson's "Red Moon" which established significant advances in freeing black shows from the degradation of accepted minstrel traditions.

After leaving Chicago in 1918, following a series of triumphs in music as well as real estate speculation, Jordan continued his diverse interests in various business and musical ventures, and he is reported to have made, lost, and regained at least four separate fortunes. Among his post-Chicago activities were the 1919 assistant directorship of Will Marion Cook's New York Syncopated Orchestra at the Forty-fourth Street Theater in Manhattan, and his work during the 1930s as conductor for the Negro Unit Orchestra of the Federal Theater Project, where he conducted for Orson Welles' production of "Macbeth." Jordan later moved to Tacoma where he was established in the real estate business as late as the 1960s.

With the money acquired from his successful musical ventures, Joseph Jordan began speculating in real estate in Chicago's Black Belt. His major venture was the purchase in 1916 of the corner of State and Thirty-sixth streets for a reported \$25,000 and his improvement of the site with a modern store and apartment building. Probably due to reluctance by banks to issue a mortgage for such an unprecedented project, construction was financed through a \$45,000 bond issue obtained through the Lincoln State Bank of Chicago, a white-owned bank at 3105 South State Street. The bonds were put up for general sale and were offered to the black community through large display ads published in the *Chicago Defender*.

Ground was broken for the building in October, 1916, and by May of the following year it was completed and ready to receive tenants. Referred to in *The Half Century Magazine* as "the largest commercial building yet erected by Colored men," the Jordan Building overshadowed all existing properties in the area, the majority of which had been erected over two decades previously. With facilities for five large ground-floor shops and

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eight five-room apartments on the upper two stories, the Jordan Building has a bold presence on the State Street business district with its finely detailed facades of buff wire-cut brick and white terra-cotta trim. Designed by J.N. Coleman, a white architect whose practice consisted largely of South Side commercial structures, the Jordan Building is notable for its unique composition and detailing which were undoubtedly influenced by the work of noted architect Louis H. Sullivan. Sullivan's influence on Coleman's composition is especially evident in the "Sullivan-esque" organic quality of the ornamental terra cotta at the entrances and parapet wall, and their relationship to the block-like massing of the structure.

The Jordan Building set an important precedent of new construction and economic development which had a direct influence on the growth of Black Metropolis during the decade following its construction. Jordan retained ownership of the building until 1918 when he sold it at a profit before leaving Chicago to live in New York. The commercial viability of the venture is evidenced by the fact that the bond issue was successfully paid off on time and that the building had a good rental record through the 1920s. One of the prominent tenants of the building was the real estate firm of Anderson & Terrell, whose Pyramid Building and Loan Association was Chicago's first black-owned building and loan association, and who, according to an article in *The Half Century Magazine*, were involved in the construction of the Jordan Building itself.

The Jordan Building is still standing as originally designed, but it is in a serious state of deterioration due to neglect over a great period of time. Only three of the ground floor stores are still occupied, and the balance of the building is vacant and open to the weather and vandals. With the exception of some deflection of the exterior masonry at the third story level, the basic structure seems to be sound and in stable enough condition to allow a thorough renovation of this historic structure.

M.R.A. _____
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PROPERTY NAME OVERTON HYGIENIC BUILDING

LOCATION 3619-27 S. State Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

OWNER'S NAME Exchange Natl. Bank under Trust Agreement #18307

LOCATION 120 S. LaSalle Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

STATE Illinois ZIP 60603

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds

118 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 47,48,49,50,51, BLK. A IN FREEMAN'S ADDITION TO
CHICAGO, BEING THE N. 20 ACRES OF THE W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{2}$ SEC.
34-39-14

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE _____

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1922-23 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Z.Erol Smith, Architect

DESCRIPTION Four-story concrete-frame building clad in yellow-brown wire-cut
face brick and glazed white terra cotta. Allowances were made for
the addition of additional stories, as evidenced by the extension
of the elevator and mechanical shaft two stories above the roof
level.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS Storefront alterations executed ca. 1960, including
the bricking-up of the three southern storefronts.
The original openings, however, are still intact.

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

a major black-oriented financial empire which included banking, insurance, publishing and manufacturing, all of which were headquartered in the building. The building also was the first structure in Black Metropolis to incorporate first-class rental offices for professional services.

(SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks

320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois

TEL 744 3038

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LOCATION _____

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY _____

CAMERA FACING _____

DATE _____

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OVERTON HYGIENIC/DOUGLASS NATIONAL BANK BUILDING
3619-27 South State Street

Date of construction: 1922-23

Architect: Z. Erol Smith

In announcing the groundbreaking for the Overton Hygienic/Douglass National Bank Building, an editorial published in *The Half Century Magazine* stated:

Commercially speaking, the ground breaking for the new home of the Douglass National Bank, which took place in Chicago in November, marked another stride in racial history. This new building is being erected at a cost of a quarter of a million dollars, and when completed will be the finest structure of its kind owned by Colored people.

But just as it is impossible to value a home in dollars and cents, so is it impossible to place a monetary value on this very interesting building project—for its value to the race is immeasurable.

Promoted during construction as a "monument to Negro thrift and industry," the Overton Hygienic Building was also in effect a tribute to the diverse business genius of its principal backer, Anthony Overton. Starting with a small cosmetics firm which he built into a major industry through his unrelenting standards of quality and business integrity, Overton eventually expanded his interests to a wide variety of enterprises that were of great importance to the development of Black Metropolis. Among the diverse enterprises founded by Overton in response to the needs of the growing black community were the Overton Hygienic Company, a pioneering firm in black cosmetics; the Victory Life Insurance Company; the *Chicago Bee*, a major black newspaper; *The Half Century Magazine*, a black-oriented monthly magazine; and the Douglass National Bank, the first black bank to be granted a national charter. The construction of the Overton Hygienic Building in 1922-23 not only provided quarters for Overton's diverse financial empire, but also provided the first new rental office space to be made available to black professionals, making the building the prime business address of Black Metropolis.

Overton was born into slavery on March 21, 1865, at Monroe, Louisiana. He was educated at Washburn College and at the University of Kansas where he received a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1888 and later served as Judge of the Municipal Court in Shawnee County, Kansas. After a brief venture as proprietor of a general store in Oklahoma, Overton moved to Kansas City where in 1898 he established one of the pioneering firms to specialize in the black cosmetics market, the Overton Hygienic Company. In need of expanded facilities, Overton moved the company to Chicago in 1911 where he set up his residence and factory in a former apartment building at 5200 South Wabash Avenue. Through creative marketing techniques such as comprehensive advertising programs and home agent solicitation of Overton Hygienic products, the firm rapidly became one of the foremost producers of black cosmetics, with sales distribution extending as far as Egypt,

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Liberia, and Japan. Overton Hygienic products were always marked by quality and high ethical standards, as evidenced by Overton's steadfast refusal to manufacture degrading products such as skin bleachers which were prominently advertised in black press of the time. Individual products manufactured by Overton Hygienic numbered over one hundred and included face powder, perfumes, shoe polish, hair preparations, baking powder, toilet water, and flavoring extracts.

Building on public confidence in the Overton Hygienic Company, Overton launched *The Half Century Magazine* in 1916, marking the beginning of what was to become an extensive publishing enterprise. *The Half Century Magazine* was a variety magazine aimed at the black audience, and it included black fiction, news reports, homemaking features, and essays on the problems of succeeding in black business ventures. Not afraid to introduce healthy competition in the black marketplace, Overton established the newspaper the *Chicago Bee* in 1926 to take on Robert S. Abbott's popular *Chicago Defender*. Similarly, Overton sought to break into the fledgling black insurance market through his establishment of the Victory Life Insurance Company.

One of Overton's proudest achievements was the establishment of the Douglass National Bank in 1922. From the beginnings of Black Metropolis at the turn of the century, banks were either white-owned and -operated concerns within the black community, or were small privately-owned banks or building and loan associations which, although financed by black capital, were free from the protective safeguards of state or national charters. The need for a black-owned bank under the protection of state or national supervision was strongly expressed in the January, 1919 issue of Overton's *The Half Century Magazine*:

The most deplorable condition of all is that many of our people individually as well as churches, societies and other organizations have large funds on deposit in white banks in which not only the said banking institutions would refuse to give any of our people employment or make them loans, but what is worse, these same Negro funds are loaned to white business institutions, that likewise would not give employment to any of our race in any capacity. The Negro's money is used to close the door of opportunity in his own face.

Two years later, Jesse Binga's private bank became the first black-owned bank to be re-organized and operated under state charter, followed by the establishment in 1922 of Overton's rival Douglass National Bank. Both institutions successfully operated in healthy competition until both were destroyed by the Great Depression in the early 1930s.

By 1922, Overton's diverse business interests had outgrown his Wabash Avenue headquarters, with his varied companies scattered in isolated buildings throughout the South Side. To consolidate his interests, Overton announced plans in 1922 to erect the Overton Hygienic Building, a projected six-story structure which would centrally house his varied manufacturing, publishing, and business enterprises, as well as providing modern office space for rental to professionals. Like the earlier Jordan Building, Overton sought to finance the building through the selling of bonds, and he placed prominent advertisements in his *The Half Century Magazine* encouraging the black community to financially

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participate in the project. The advertisements prominently featured illustrations of the architect's rendering of the building captioned "A Monument to Negro Industry and Thrift," followed by text which explained:

We have money with which to finance three stories of this building, but we want to erect six stories and make it a credit to the race in every particular. Accordingly, we have issued First Mortgage Gold Bonds to the extent of \$200,000.00.

The bond campaign was apparently not a full success as the building was eventually erected as a four-story structure rather than the six stories that Overton had hoped for. Nevertheless, the Overton Hygienic Building was an imposing structure within Black Metropolis and firmly established the magnitude of the Overton interests with the black community.

The Overton Hygienic Building is similar in appearance to the earlier Jordan Building with street facades of yellow-brown wire-cut brick and white terra-cotta trim, but it is considerably more substantial in size and materials of construction. The Overton was supported by a complete reinforced concrete frame, with every effort having been made to make the building as fireproof as possible. The building was designed by Z. Erol Smith, a South Side white architect who had considerable experience in the design of commercial buildings throughout the city.

The quarters for the Douglass National Bank and Victory Life Insurance Company occupied the majority of the ground floor, emphasized at night by a series of bare light bulbs which studded the terra-cotta string course above the storefronts. Interiors of the bank were finished with white marble applied to walls, counters, and lower parts of the concrete structural columns, and vault and safe deposit facilities were included. The second floor was arranged for rental offices which were the finest business facilities in Black Metropolis. Tenants included the Theater Owners Booking Association (T.O.B.A.) which managed and booked black stage acts; Chicago's first black architect, Walter T. Bailey, who in 1926 designed the eight-story Pythian Temple at State Street and 37th Place; and Overton's son-in-law, Dr. Julian H. Lewis, professor of pathology at the University of Chicago. Other tenants included a variety of physicians, lawyers, music publishers, and various business enterprises. The third floor was occupied by the Overton businesses while the fourth floor was planned for the manufacturing facilities of the Overton Hygienic Company.

The Overton interests continued to prosper and grow in the building throughout the twenties, and for his significant business achievements Anthony Overton was honored with two awards for his advancement of black business, the Springarn Medal in 1927 and the Harmon Business Award in 1928.

Initially, Overton's carefully managed business ventures weathered the Great Depression fairly well, but three major runs on the Douglass National Bank in 1932 due to public hysteria over bank closings resulted in its failure and the near insolvency of the closely allied Victory Life Insurance Company. While he was able to retain control of the Overton Hygienic Company and the *Chicago Bee*, the financial depletions resulting from the loss

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of the bank and the general financial hardships of the Depression greatly hampered the growth of Overton's business enterprises, and forced the eventual abandonment of the Overton Hygienic Building for more consolidated quarters in the Chicago Bee Building one block south. Overton retained control of the Overton Hygienic Company until his death in 1946, and the business still is in operation today.

The successes and failures of Overton's career were best described in an obituary published in the *Journal of Negro History* for July, 1947:

His life offers many lessons in avoiding pitfalls and at the same time offers an example of painstaking effort and perserverance through trials to a measure of success. While his life shows that some achievements are not possible under some circumstances, it demonstrates at the same time what is possible to the man of energy and enterprise. Overton's life as a whole is a part of that chapter in American history which records the rise of a pioneer from humble walks of life to usefulness and influence. He will long be remembered among the first of those Negro business men who endeavored to lead the way onward for the quarter of a million Negroes in Chicago.

The Overton Hygienic Building is now vacant except for the ground-floor stores.

M.R.A. _____
H/D (IF APP) _____
NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE _____
HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL _____
OTHER _____

PROPERTY NAME CHICAGO BEE BUILDING
LOCATION 3647-55 S. State Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago
COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653
OWNER'S NAME Ida Overton
LOCATION P.O. Box 87639 CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago
STATE Illinois ZIP 60680
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 21, 22, 23, (EX. STREET AND EX. E. 25 FT. SD. LOTS
BLK. 3 IN E. SMITH'S SUB. OF S 10 ACRES OF N½ SW½
SEC. 34-39-14
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE _____

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1929-31 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Z. Erol Smith, architect

DESCRIPTION Three-story concrete framed building fronted with glazed terra cotta in
four colors. Interior arranged for stores on the ground floor and
a combination of offices and apartments on the upper stories.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS South storefronts and entry boarded ca. 1970

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

SIGNIFICANCE The last major structure to be erected in Black Metropolis, the Chicago Bee
Building was built by black entrepreneur Anthony Overton to house his
newspaper, the Chicago Bee. The Chicago Bee Building is also architecturally
significant in the quality of its finely detailed "art deco" terra cotta facade.
(SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks
320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois TEL 744 3038

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CHICAGO BEE BUILDING
3647-55 South State Street

Erected: 1929-31

Architect: Z. Erol Smith

The last major structure to be erected in the State Street commercial district was the combination newspaper office and apartment building commissioned in 1929 by Anthony Overton for his newspaper the *Chicago Bee*. Overton, whose business career was started with the Overton Hygienic cosmetics manufacturing firm, later branched out into varied fields including banking, insurance, and publishing. His first publishing venture was started in 1916 with the publication of *The Half Century Magazine*, which featured a variety of short stories, informational articles, and nationwide news reports, as well as providing a prominent advertising forum for the diverse products manufactured by the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Company. Late in 1925, *The Half Century Magazine* was phased out in favor of a new publication, the *Chicago Bee*, a newspaper which was intended to compete with Robert S. Abbott's nationally distributed weekly, the *Chicago Defender*. From its inception, the *Chicago Bee* was published from offices in the Overton Hygienic Building, with its printing plant being located in a storefront one block south on State Street. Despite the increasing shift of the black business district to 47th Street, Overton affirmed his confidence in the viability of State Street by announcing the erection of a new three-story building to consolidate the facilities of the *Chicago Bee* in 1929. Although started at the beginning of the Great Depression, construction continued throughout 1930, and was ready for full occupancy in 1931. Ironically, the failure of Overton's Douglass National Bank in 1932 so weakened the assets of the Overton Hygienic Manufacturing that it was forced to give up the Overton Hygienic Building and share quarters with the *Chicago Bee* in its new building. The Overton Hygienic Manufacturing Company and the *Chicago Bee* continued to share the building until the early 1940s when the newspaper ceased publication. The cosmetics firm continued to occupy the building, and it still maintains quarters at the State Street address.

The Chicago Bee Building is one of the most picturesque of the Black Metropolis group, being the only structure designed in the Art Deco style of the late 1920s. Designed by Z. Erol Smith, the same South Side architect who created the earlier Overton Hygienic Building, the Chicago Bee Building features a richly ornamented facade executed entirely in terra cotta, the ground floors finished in two shades of green with intricate incised ornamentation. The terra cotta was executed by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company of Chicago which employed a number of talented French modelers who had mastered the innovative Art Deco forms after having previously worked on the exhibits of the Paris 1925 Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. The Chicago Bee Building still stands largely as originally designed with minimal alterations.

OTHER

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

STANDARD FORM NO. 104-101
a regiment commanded entirely by blacks. The Eight Regiment is significant
as a pioneering black military organization, and was especially noted for
its service record during World War I. (SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks

320 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois 60610

TEL 744 3038

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LOCATION

CAMERA FACING

PHOTOGRAPHER

LOCATION OF NEGATIVE

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY

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EIGHTH REGIMENT ARMORY
3533 South Giles Avenue

Date of construction: 1914-15

Architect: J.B. Dibelka

Erected at a cost of \$250,000 the Eighth Regiment Armory was built by the Illinois National Guard as headquarters for the only regiment in the county to be commanded entirely by blacks. Originally organized as a volunteer regiment drawn from the black community during the Spanish-American War in 1898, the "Fighting 8th" was established as an infantry division of the Illinois National Guard, with its regimental headquarters located in a former livery stable at the corner of 35th Street and Forest Avenue. These accommodations proved to be wholly inadequate for military purposes, consequently petitions were started in the state legislature as early as 1910 for the construction of a new armory building.

Construction on the new armory was started late in 1914, and was largely completed by the winter of the following year. Designed by Chicago architect James B. Dibelka, who was chief architect for the State of Illinois, the building gave a strong appearance of strength and monumentality through the detailing of its brown pressed brick and Bedford limestone facade, yet at the same time was visually balanced with the residential buildings which surrounded it. The principal room of the interior was the massive drill hall which clear-spanned across nearly the full depth of the building, the roof being carried by trusses. The balance of the building was planned for the varied offices and functions of the regiment, including a banquet hall, two reception halls, a dining room with full kitchen facilities, and a bowling alley. The building was also intended to be available for community use, and was the site of numerous neighborhood meetings and social functions. At the time of its completion, the Eighth Regiment Armory was the only building of its type to be erected for use by a black regiment in the United States.

Under command of Colonel Franklin A. Denison, a practicing lawyer and former Assistant Attorney General of the State of Illinois, the Eighth Regiment saw meritorious service during border conflicts with Mexico in 1916, and later in World War I when it was incorporated into the 370th U.S. Infantry, serving on the major battlefronts of France. The "Fighting 8th" gained special note as the last regiment to drive the German forces from the Aisne-Marne region prior to the armistice on November 11, 1918.

Upon their return, the victorious members of the former Eighth Regiment were hailed for their brave and meritorious service, and it was stated that nearly every man who lived to return carried with him some kind of decoration for valor in action. Special honor was paid to the 144 members who never returned home, and a plaque was installed on the exterior of the Armory listing their name and rank. In honor of Lieutenant George R. Giles, the highest ranking officer to be killed in action, the name of the street on which the Armory was located was changed from Forest to Giles Avenue by special provision of the City Council in 1922.

The "Fighting 8th" and its successors eventually incorporated into several specialized

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military divisions, with a new armory headquarters at 5200 South Cottage Grove Avenue, designed by the architectural firm of Perkins, Chatten and Hammond in 1931. The historic Eighth Regiment Armory still stands largely as originally designed, although it is currently vacant. Several proposals have been offered for the rehabilitation of the building for productive new use.

M.R.A. _____
H/D (IF APP) _____
NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE _____
HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL _____
OTHER _____

PROPERTY NAME VICTORY SCULPTURE
LOCATION South side of 35th St. at King Dr. CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago
COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653
OWNER'S NAME Paul Karas, Commissioner of Public Works; City of Chicago
LOCATION 121 N. LaSalle Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago, Illinois
STATE _____ ZIP _____
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION CENTERED ON MEDIAN PARKWAY DIVIDING MARTIN LUTHER KING.
DRIVE, IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF 35th STREET, INCLUDED AS
A PART OF THE BOULEVARD SYSTEM OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO.
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE _____

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1927, 1936 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Leonard Crunelle, sculptor
John A. Nyden, architect

DESCRIPTION GRANITE PYLON ON CONCRETE BASE INSET WITH FOUR BRONZE RELIEF PLAQUES
FINISHED WITH A BLACK PATINATION. THE FIGURE OF A WWI DOUGHBOY WAS
ADDED TO THE TOP IN 1936 (SEE ATTACHED)

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS FIGURE AT TOP ADDED IN 1936 TO THE ORIGINAL COMPOSITION.

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

Guard during World War I, the first Regiment to be entirely commanded
by blacks. The monument was the second monument to be erected in honor of
black war heroes in the United States. (SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks
320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois TEL 744 3038

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PHOTOGRAPHER _____
LOCATION OF NEGATIVE _____

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VICTORY SCULPTURE

35th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

Date of construction: 1927, 1936

Sculpture: Leonard Crunelle

Architect for base: John A. Nyden

At the close of World War I, movements were begun within the black community to honor the valorous achievements of the Eighth Regiment of the Illinois National Guard which served in France under the 370th U.S. Infantry. Although a memorial tablet was placed on the Eighth Regiment Armory honoring members who died in service, and the street upon which the Armory was located was renamed in 1922 in honor of Lieutenant George L. Giles, the highest ranking officer to be killed in action, the black community began petitioning for the erection of a suitable monument befitting the valor of the "Fighting Eighth." By the mid 1920s proposals for erection of a permanent monument in the parkway of Grand Boulevard in the vicinity of 35th Street were met with stiff opposition by the South Park Commission which had control over the boulevard system. The South Park Commission maintained that there was no space available for such a monument, but relented after the *Chicago Defender* began actively promoting a "vote no" campaign against the commission board, urging blacks to defeat any project backed by the South Park Commission until due recognition of the community's war heroes was realized. The monument was funded jointly by the South Park Commission and the State of Illinois, and sited to replace a fountain in the boulevard parkway at the corner of Grand Boulevard (now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) and 35th Street, immediately across from the offices of the Liberty Life Insurance Company. The design was prepared in 1926 and consisted of a circular grey granite shaft with three symbolic inset bronze sculptural panels finished with a rich black patination portraying a black soldier, a black woman symbolizing motherhood, and the figure of Columbia, holding a tablet which recorded the locations of the regiment's principal battles. The sculpture was designed and executed by French-born sculptor Leonard Crunelle (1872-1944), a former pupil of noted Chicago sculptor Lorado Taft. The base and architectural setting of the monument was designed in collaboration with Chicago architect John A. Nyden. The completed monument was dedicated on Armistice Day, November 11, 1927 in an extensive public ceremony. In 1936, the figure of a uniformed World War I black doughboy was added to the top of the monument, the sculpture also being the work of Leonard Crunelle.

The sculpture is one of the most famous landmarks of Chicago's black community, and is the site of an annual Memorial Day ceremony when the surviving members of the "Fighting Eighth" gather to honor the memory of their fallen comrades.

M.R.A.

H/D (IF APP)

NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE

HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL

OTHER

NOT LISTED

PROPERTY NAME LIBERTY LIFE/SUPREME LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

LOCATION 3501 N. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

OWNER'S NAME Supreme Life Insurance Company

LOCATION 3501 N. King Drive CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago, Illinois

STATE Illinois ZIP 60653

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds

118 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOT 12 (EX. ALLEY) AND W 124 FT. 1 1/2 IN. OF 13, BLOCK 1.

LOOMIS' RESUB. OF LOTS 1-4 IN BLOCK 1 IN ELLIS' WEST ADD.

TO CHICAGO BEING A SUB. OF W. 86.06 ACRES OF S.E. 1/4

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE SEC. 34-39-14

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1921 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Albert Anis, architect

DESCRIPTION Two-story brick commercial building with chالfered corner. Originally
arranged for a bank on the ground floor and retail offices above, the
entire building was later taken over by Liberty Life and its successor
the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS The entire building was extensively remodeled in
ca. 1950 with new porcelain panel exterior cladding
and remodeled interiors. The original decorative
plaster ceiling of the ground floor still remains
above a dropped ceiling.

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

the first black owned and operated insurance company in the North, founded by Frank L. Gillespie in 1919. Although the building has been extensively altered since its original construction, it's present configuration reflects the firm's continued operation and prosperity since its precedent-setting founding . (SEE ATTACHED)

NOT LISTED

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks
320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610 TEL 744 3038

ATTACH 5" by 7" PHOTO HERE--USE MASKING
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INFORMATION BELOW SHOULD ALSO APPEAR ON
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USE CONTINUATION SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL
PHOTOS, IF ANY

PROPERTY NAME _____
LOCATION _____ CITY/TOWN/VICINITY _____
CAMERA FACING _____ DATE _____
PHOTOGRAPHER _____
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Continuation sheet LIBERTY LIFE/SUPREME LIFE

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LIBERTY LIFE/SUPREME LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
3501 South Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

NOT LISTED

Date of construction: 1921

Architect: Albert Anis

Extensively altered ca. 1950.

One of the most significant business ventures of Black Metropolis was the Liberty Life Insurance Company, established in 1919 as the first black-owned and -operated insurance company in the North. The establishment of the firm was a direct response to the long-standing refusal of large scale white-controlled insurance companies to offer adequate policies to blacks, considering them a bad risk because of the significantly higher mortality statistics for blacks as compared to whites. With the exception of inadequate industrial group policies offered by some companies, comprehensive life insurance protection for blacks in Chicago and the North was largely non-existent. Recognizing the need and demand for adequate, reasonably priced life insurance services, Liberty Life was incorporated on June 30, 1919, largely through the efforts of Frank L. Gillespie (1876-1925) who had formerly been an agent for the Royal Insurance Company, a white-owned firm which dealt in industrial group policies for blacks. Dissatisfied with the lack of quality life insurance services for the black community, Gillespie withdrew from Public Life and began organizing many of the most influential citizens of Black Metropolis to back an independent black-owned and -operated life insurance company. For additional financial backing, Gillespie actively solicited the black community to invest in Liberty Life stock, taking large ads in the *Chicago Defender* and other publications of the period, stressing the importance of racial unity for the establishment and support of black-owned businesses. Citing white-owned businesses and suppliers that had virtually cut off services and goods in the tense weeks following the Chicago Race Riots of July, 1919, a Liberty Life ad in the *Chicago Defender* for September 20, 1919 stated: "From now on and until eternity, we must begin opening grocery stores, shoe stores, dry goods stores, meat markets, fish markets, and business places of every kind and description. But please do not expect your people to patronize and support your business because you are a Negro. We have had too many of that kind for businessmen in the past forty years. There are fortunes waiting for the Negro businessman who will put in a line of first-class goods and sell them just as reasonably as his competitor (the white man) can sell his first-class goods. Then offset the rise in the prices by keeping yourself as well as your place of business clean and deal HONESTLY with your people. When that type of businessman opens up any kind of business whatsoever among the Negroes in Chicago, his success will be assured from the beginning, and after all, that is the only kind of businessman who should succeed."

The \$100,000 deposit required to begin operations was raised by 1921, and the firm began writing policies in the summer of that year. The success of the firm more than justified Gillespie's hopes and expectations; by 1925 it had written over \$5,000,000 in policies and had expanded with branch offices in Michigan, Kentucky, Missouri, and Washington, D.C.

The headquarters for Liberty Life was initially located in a suite of second-floor

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offices of the Roosevelt State Bank Building, a two-story neo-classically detailed structure erected at the southeast corner of 35th Street and Grand Boulevard (now King Drive) in 1921. The volume of business at Liberty Life was so great that the firm bought the building outright in 1924, eventually taking over the entire structure for its offices. Following Gillespie's death in 1925, the success of the firm continued, and in 1929 its financial resources were expanded by its merger with two out-of-state firms to form the Supreme Life Insurance Company of America.

Despite severe business conditions brought on by the Great Depression during the early 1930s, the sound management of Supreme Life kept the firm on a solid footing, and it was one of the few major businesses of Black Metropolis to survive. In the years following the Depression, the firm regained its full financial posture, and it still remains as one of the major black-owned and -operated insurance companies in the United States.

As early as 1925, Liberty Life proposed replacing the two-story headquarters building with a \$5,000,000 skyscraper, but the firm and its successor has remained in the original structure throughout its existence and has expanded into several adjoining properties to the east. In about 1950, the building was thoroughly remodeled on both the interior and exterior, creating its present appearance. The neo-classical facade was stripped down and re-clad in porcelain-coated metal panels, leaving little visual evidence of the original building other than its general shape and proportion. Interiors were also remodeled with hardwood paneling and metal, but the original decorative ceiling of the first floor still exists above a dropped ceiling.

Although the building no longer reflects the way it looked at the time Liberty Life was established in 1921, its present appearance reflects its growth and prosperity as a viable company, fulfilling the goals originally outlined by Frank L. Gillespie at its founding. In its present configuration, the building has become a familiar and symbolic landmark of the history of both the precedent-setting firm that occupies it and the neighborhood in which it has long been a part.

NOT LISTED

M.R.A. _____
H/D (IF APP) _____
NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE _____
HABS/HAER NRA/TI IS IL _____
OTHER _____

PROPERTY NAME CHICAGO DEFENDER BUILDING
LOCATION 3435 S. Indiana Avenue CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago, Illinois
COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60653
OWNER'S NAME LaSalle National Bank - Trust #27595
LOCATION 135 S. LaSalle Street CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago, Illinois
STATE Illinois ZIP 60603
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 30,31, BLOCK 1 OF HARRIET FARLIN'S SUB. OF LOTS
8,9, and 10 BLK. 1 DYER & DAVIDSON'S SUB. OF SE $\frac{1}{4}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$
SEC. 34-39-14
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE _____

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1899 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER Henry Newhouse, architect

DESCRIPTION Three-story brick building with interiors of semi-mill construction.
A former Synagogue, the building was altered for the offices and plant
of the Chicago Defender newspaper in 1920-21

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS After the Chicago Defender moved into the building
in 1921, the newspaper executed frequent remodelings
to keep pace with the newspaper's circulation. These
included the removal of the sheet metal cornice and
pilaster caps to allow additional offices on the third
story and additions to the pressroom at the rear. New
aluminum storefronts have been installed and the exterior
masonry has been painted.

BUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH
PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

SIGNIFICANCE Home from 1921 until 1960 of the Chicago Defender, one of the most influential
black publications in the United States (see attached history)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks
320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610 TEL 744 3038

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CHICAGO DEFENDER BUILDING
3435 South Indiana Avenue

Date of construction: 1899

Architect: Henry Newhouse

From 1920 until 1960 this former synagogue was the home of the *Chicago Defender*, one of the most influential black publications of the twentieth century. From its modest beginnings in 1905, the *Chicago Defender* rapidly developed into one of the premier forums of black journalism, with its circulation and influence extending nationwide.

The *Chicago Defender* was founded by Robert S. Abbott (1870-1940), a native of Georgia who had learned the printing trade at Hampton Institute and later moved to Chicago where he received a degree from Kent College of Law in 1899. Undaunted by the existence of several black-oriented newspapers in Chicago, Abbott launched the *Chicago Defender* in 1905 with a reported total capital of twenty-five cents and an office consisting of a one-room apartment at 3159 South State Street furnished with a borrowed kitchen chair and folding table. Under Abbott's shrewd guidance, the *Chicago Defender* became considerably different from its competitors, combining local and national news reporting with outspoken editorial policies championing a wide spectrum of pertinent civil rights issues. The phenomenal growth and popularity of the *Chicago Defender* was also due in large part to the creative journalistic abilities of J. Hockley Smith, who as Abbott's assistant from 1910 until his death in 1915 did much to develop the paper into a major force in black journalism.

The Great Migration that increased Chicago's black population by 148% between 1914 and 1920 was initiated almost exclusively by Abbott's *Defender* editorials urging blacks to leave the oppression and poverty of the South for new opportunities in Chicago, underscoring the paper's national influence at the time. With a rapidly increasing circulation and scope of operations, the *Chicago Defender* required ever increasing facilities and personnel during the first decade of its existence. Although the *Defender* had self-sufficient facilities for its editorial and circulation departments during the first fifteen years of operation, all linotype and printing had to be jobbed out to outside printing firms. Abbott sought to establish his own printing plant for publication of the *Defender* after his regular white-owned printing firm refused to print the paper due to repercussions of the race riots of 1919, forcing Abbott to obtain the last-minute services of a printing firm in Gary to print the paper during the subsequent period of racial unrest in the city. In 1920, Abbott purchased a three-story building at 3435 South Indiana Avenue which was to remain the headquarters of the *Chicago Defender* from 1921 to 1960. The building had been erected in 1899 as the synagogue of the South Side Hebrew Congregation, and was altered for warehouse use after the congregation vacated the structure in 1915. The offices of the paper were located in the three-story portion at the front while the printing and linotype operations occupied the former synagogue auditorium at the rear. Frequent additions and alterations were made to expand the pressroom at the rear due to increased demand for the paper, and the offices were later expanded to include a two-

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story residence to the north (now demolished). For further expansion, the original sheet metal cornice and decorative pilasters of the facade were later removed by the *Chicago Defender* to facilitate the installation of offices in the former attic of the building. After Abbott's death in 1940, the management of the *Chicago Defender* was assumed by his nephew, Robert Sengstacke, who diversified the company by establishing the Sengstacke Syndicate and expanded the *Defender* to daily publication schedule in 1958.

The *Chicago Daily Defender* vacated the Indiana Avenue headquarters in 1960 for larger quarters in the former Illinois Automobile Club Building at 2400 South Michigan Avenue, which was originally designed in 1936 by Philip Brooks Maher.

The former *Defender* headquarters on Indiana Avenue are currently occupied as offices and meeting rooms for the New Second Ward Regular Democratic Organization. The exterior of the building still remains largely as it looked when occupied by the *Chicago Defender*, the only major alteration being the installation of new aluminum storefronts at ground level.

M.R.A.

H/D (IF APP)

NHL NRI NRDS NRDO DOE

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OTHER

PROPERTY NAME UNITY HALL

LOCATION 3140 S. Indiana Avenue CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois ZIP 60616

OWNER'S NAME Jerusalem Temple Church of God in Christ Inc.

LOCATION 3140 S. Indiana Avenue CITY/TOWN/VICINITY Chicago

STATE Illinois ZIP 60616

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION Cook County Recorder of Deeds

118 N. Clark Street

Chicago, Illinois 60602

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION LOTS 32-33, BLK 1 IN C.H. WALKER'S SUB. OF THAT PART N. OF S. 60 ACRES OF W $\frac{1}{2}$, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SEC. 34-39-14

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1887 ARCHITECT AND/OR BUILDER L.B. Dixon

DESCRIPTION Three-story masonry structure fronted with red pressed brick and terra cotta trim. Mansarded top story with ornamental shingles. Interior arranged for meeting rooms at the front of the structure, and a large central meeting hall at the rear.

DATE AND NATURE OF ALTERATIONS First-floor windows and doorwar altered ca. 1950. Masonry on street-front painted over.

OUTBUILDINGS AND/OR OTHER CULTURAL RESOURCES ON PROPERTY (ATTACH SKETCH PLAN IF APPLICABLE) N/A

SIGNIFICANCE Erected as a prominent Jewish social club in 1887, the building achieved its
greatest significance as the home of the People's Movement Club, a pioneering
black social organization led by Oscar DePriest. (SEE ATTACHED)

FORM PREPARED BY Timothy Samuelson - Commission on Chicago Landmarks

320 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610

TEL 744 3038

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LOCATION _____

CITY/TOWN/VICINITY _____

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UNITY HALL
3140 South Indiana Avenue

Date of construction: 1887

Architect: L.B. Dixon

Beginning in 1917, Unity Hall was the headquarters of the Peoples Movement Club, a political organization headed by Oscar Stanton De Priest, the primary leader in the drive for fair political representation in Black Metropolis. Born in Florence, Alabama, in 1871, De Priest came to Chicago in 1889 and subsequently established a construction and painting business. From the time of his arrival, De Priest was deeply interested in the political structure of the city, and his involvement soon resulted in his election as a Cook County Commissioner in 1904. As the black population grew during the first decade of the century, a movement began to establish representation for the black community in Chicago's municipal government. De Priest formed careful alliances with the white Republican political bosses who controlled the Black Metropolis wards, broadening his political support. Aspirations for black representation in the City Council were realized in 1915, when De Priest defeated three black and five white candidates in the Republican primary for the Second Ward aldermanic post, and with the combined support of the community and the white Republican party bosses, was the first black to be elected to the City Council. De Priest took an active role in attending to the needs and goals of his constituents, one of his most controversial acts being an ordinance which he proposed to the City Council in 1916 which would have revoked the business license of any establishment that discriminated in providing goods and services on the basis of race. The ordinance met with vigorous opposition and was dropped from further consideration by the City Council.

Upon election, De Priest sought to establish a new political organization supported from within the black community, creating the Peoples Movement Club in 1917. Due to the aftermath of an unsuccessful attempt by some of De Priest's political opponents to disgrace his integrity by bringing bribery charges against him, from which he was fully acquitted, De Priest did not seek re-election to his aldermanic post in 1917. De Priest's political influence remained strong despite the charges, and his Peoples Movement Club political organization remained one of the best organized political groups in Black Metropolis. De Priest later became Third Ward Committeeman in 1924, and in 1928 had the distinction of being the first black from the North to be elected to the United States House of Representatives, serving for three consecutive terms.

Unity Hall, headquarters of De Priest's Peoples Movement Club, was erected in 1886 as the Lakeside Club, a Jewish social organization. The building was designed by L.B. Dixon, who lived in the area and was also responsible for the design of many residences in the Douglas community. Faced in red pressed brick with terra-cotta and sheet metal trim, the building is an excellent example of the type of buildings erected in the Douglas community in the 1880s. Interiors were arranged for numerous small clubrooms at the front and a large assembly hall in the rear.

After its occupancy by the De Priest organization, the building served for many years

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as headquarters for William Dawson, a prominent Democratic political leader of long standing. Now occupied as a church, the building remains largely as originally designed except for the painting of the exterior masonry and alterations to the doorway and front porch.

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REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS:

ILLINOIS HISTORIC STRUCTURES SURVEY

1975

depository for survey records: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
405 E. WASHINGTON STREET
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

CHICAGO HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

1983

depository for survey records: COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS
320 N. CLARK STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF THE DOUGLAS NEIGHBORHOOD

1982

depository for survey records: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
405 E. WASHINGTON STREET
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS